

April 16, 2009

NAVAIR and industry team build three F-5F Franken-Tigers



NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, Patuxent River, Md.—A NAVAIR and Northrop Grumman team designed and built three F-5F Franken-Tiger Adversary aircraft to meet an urgent Fleet requirement.

The F-5F Franken-Tiger was built using parts from a Navy two-seat F-5F Tiger II aircraft and from single-seat, former Swiss Air Force, F-5E aircraft.

“A Fleet requirement came into our office in late September 2005 asking for more F-5 Adversary pilots to staff a new squadron being established at Naval Air Station Key West, Florida,” said Jay Bolles, Adversary Aircraft program manager (PMA-207). “We needed a new two-seat trainer in order to meet this requirement.”

The four remaining Navy F-5F Tiger II’s were too costly to maintain, had very little service life left and needed to be retired, added Bolles. One of the Navy F-5Fs was lost in a mid-air collision on June 13, 2008 so there were only three left to convert.

“Our program office was already working with our industry partner to convert 41 newer, former Swiss Air Force F-5E aircraft and older Navy F-5E Adversary aircraft into new F-5Ns,” said Bolles. “So building the Franken-Tigers was a

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natural extension.”

This is how the Franken-Tigers were created, he said.

“Very simply, we took the two-seat cockpit section and the tail section of the old Navy F-5Fs and bolted these on to the newer center section of the former Swiss F-5Es,” said Bolles. “The conversion work took approximately two years to complete and was a model of cooperation between NAVAIR and our industry partner, Northrop Grumman. The Block I Avionics upgrade, the LN-260 Inertial Navigation Unit and the cockpit display unit was also included in the baseline configuration, vastly improving navigation and pilot situational awareness. We will deliver 41 F-5Ns and three F-5F Franken-Tigers on time and on budget.”

The first Franken-Tiger made its maiden flight on November 25, 2008 and was delivered to Marine Fighter Squadron, Training 401 (VMFT-401) at Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma, Ariz., on December 9, 2008.

The second Franken-Tiger was delivered to Fighter Composite Squadron 111 (VFC-111) at NAS Key West, Fla., in December 19, 2008 and the third is scheduled to be delivered to VFC-13 at NAS Fallon, Nev., in January 2010.

Photo: “The rollout of the new F-5F Franken-Tiger on April 23, 2008 at Northrop Grumman’s plant in St Augustine, Fla.”